

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McConnell,

Given the profound challenges that COVID-19 presents for our electoral process, it is essential that Congress act immediately to defend our democracy and ensure ballot access for all voters. It is not too early, nor too late, to invest in the security and sanctity of our elections. With that in mind, we urge both Chambers to move quickly to provide \$4 billion to support state vote-by-mail programs for the entirety of this election cycle. To be clear, these funds should be provided in addition to, not in replace of, further funding that will ensure the safety and sanctity of in-person voting and critical ballot access initiatives.

Every single registered voter in our country should be mailed a ballot, guaranteeing that no one must risk exposure to a deadly virus to exercise their right to vote and no election workers are forced to risk their lives to defend the integrity of our elections. Prior to this pandemic, vote by mail was already a gold standard for voter access and participation. States like Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii all offer models for success. And in response to COVID-19, we have seen more states like New York, New Hampshire and Maryland commit decisively to ensure ballot access.

Our federal government must support those efforts. If we don't, we risk grave damage to our electoral process, and grave threats to the health and safety of millions of American voters. Just last week, in Wisconsin, we saw what happens when you ask voters to choose between democracy and health. According to reports, the lack of available poll workers resulted in the reduction of a number of polling places in certain parts of the state. The city of Milwaukee, the state's largest city and home to nearly 70 percent of the African American population, had just five polling places, down from its traditional number of 180. As a result, millions risked their lives to stand in hours-long lines, in the pouring rain, with no room to properly social distance themselves from others, all to exercise their fundamental right to choose representation.

Although voting is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution, voter disenfranchisement remains a serious issue in our democracy. Unless Congress takes action, the COVID-19 pandemic risks seriously undermining this fundamental right even further. The United States of America should set an example for democracies around the world to follow. We should proactively acknowledge and address the fact that despite the men, women, and children who have shed their own blood to achieve voting rights in this country, millions of voters, particularly voters of color and those with disabilities, struggle to access the ballot.

In the age of coronavirus, no one should be forced to choose between their health and their right to vote. Unfortunately, all projections point to this pandemic being a part of American life for quite some time. Whether and when this current surge will abate is unclear, and many experts project some sort of resurgence in the fall, as voters head to the polls for primaries and the November 3 general election.

Vote by mail is the best chance our country has to protect the integrity of our 2020 elections. Even with a full vote by mail program, there needs to be in-person options for voters who do not receive their ballot, need assistance, or otherwise prefer to vote in person. We urge Congress to act quickly to deliver the federal funding required to support states that commit to implement full vote by mail for the remainder of the 2020 election cycle.

Thank you for your urgent consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

/s/ Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/ Stephen Lynch  
Member of Congress

/s/ William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

/s/ Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

/s/ Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

/s/ Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

/s/ Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress